

765 worn is black. Others smear themselves with white earth. Relations in the village shave their heads three days after a death. The eldest son of the deceased sits on a stool in the road outside the village and his head is shaved by an old woman. For three days after the death of anyone of importance the villagers do not cultivate.

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[724] If a big chief dies all the surrounding people collect at the village; even if a neighbouring clan is at war hostilities are suspended, and they attend the funeral rites of their late enemy. In the case of the death of a chief a new hut is built and the deceased is buried inside in a sitting posture; the grave is dug by a brother of the deceased. A new ox hide is placed at the bottom of the grave, and the head of the corpse is covered with a water pot. Seeds of every kind of grain grown are put into the grave; sweet potatoes are excluded. The people dance and drink *tembo* for ten days and many oxen are slaughtered. The men wail for ten days, but the women wail every morning for about a year. No one cultivates the fields for ten days.

844 Birth customs.—On the occasion of a birth, if it is a boy it is kept inside the house for four days, if it is a girl for three days. When a birth takes place the female neighbours attend, and a goat is killed for the mother and the other women. No man is allowed in the hut until three or four days have elapsed. The father of the child does not eat or sleep again in the hut until the child begins to cut its teeth. The mother does not go to cultivate for about nine days after the birth.

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608 If a woman has had two children and they have both died, she will upon the birth of the third child take it out of the village on a basket-work tray and place it in the road; an old woman who has had a hint of this will go and pick it up and take it to her house, then the father of the child goes and buys it back for a goat. [304] having recovered it the father bores the lobe of its right ear and inserts a small earring of brass wire. If the child is a boy it is henceforward called Owiti and if [553] a girl it is called Awiti, meaning the child that has been thrown away. The old woman who picked up the child is afterwards called mother in addition to the real mother.

845 Twins are considered lucky, but the infants and their parents have to stay in seclusion in their hut for a whole month. Women neighbours may enter the hut [552] but men may not. The twin born first is called Apio (the one who comes quickly). The twin born second is called Adongo (the one who is delayed). The birth of [535] twins is signalled by dances which extend over a whole month; they are apparently of a somewhat obscene character.

582 Marriage customs.—Girls are betrothed at the age of seven, and they often go to their husband's house at the age of ten or eleven. The suitor commences by 583 making small payments to the father of the girl every month or two. When the man has paid say one cow and twenty sheep he takes the girl to his house.

585 The unmarried girls of the village take the bride to her husband's house. The father of the girl kills an ox and takes the meat and a quantity of *mbwa* porridge to the man's village by way of providing a wedding feast. If the man's

583 with him three or four cows. The party entered the dala very slowly
 585 feigning indifference and reluctance. The bridegroom made himself
 as inconspicuous as possible, and tried to conceal himself in the midst
 of his companions. No ceremonies took place on the day of arrival,
 but the guests were given food and spent the night in the *simba* hut.
 On the following day the bridegroom was taken to the hut of the
 bride's mother and made formally known to her. Meat was killed
 and the day was spent feasting and drinking. Finally in the evening
 the bridegroom and the bride's father sat down together and the
 bargaining began. The rest of the gathering were entertained by a
 [53] professional minstrel who sang topical songs, some composed to meet
 the occasion. His fee, incidentally was a goat, which, for some reason
 I could not discover, had to be presented to him by the bride. He was
 also given presents by the girl's father and mother.

During the bargaining the bride's father tried to get as large a
 payment as possible out of the bridegroom. If he was too greedy the
 negotiations were broken off, and the bridegroom paid compensation for
 the expenses incurred in entertaining his party and for the loss of the
 bride's virginity. But if the two came to an agreement that agree-
 ment was final, and no further demands on the father's part or sub-
 tractions on the part of the bridegroom were allowed, unless the
 former demanded to see the cattle before accepting them. This was
 sometimes done, and if the cattle were unsatisfactory he might refuse
 to proceed with the marriage. If, on the other hand, he trusted the
 bridegroom, the negotiations were considered closed, and he might
 even consent to receive a proportion of the bride-price after instead
 of before the final marriage feast had taken place, and the girl left
 her home for good. In this case the bridegroom had to give an extra
 bull, known as the *ruadh kirispa*, which was sent over for inspection
 before the feast took place. If it was accepted the final ceremonies
 were then carried through.

583 In most cases the bride-price itself was paid by instalments over
 a period that varied with the ability of the bridegroom's father to meet
 his liabilities. Usually some months elapsed before the whole number
 of cattle had been handed over, and it might even be a year or two
 before the girl's father received all that was due to him. During this
 period it was customary for the girl to pay her future husband a visit
 from time to time. She was always accompanied on these visits by
 one or two girl friends, and was expected to stay for several days.
 She slept in the *simba* hut with her betrothed, and intercourse took
 place. It sometimes, though rarely, happened that the girl conceived
 on one of these occasions. This was bad luck for the girl's parents,
 (844) but fortunate for the bridegroom, for it was absolutely necessary that
 the child should be born in his dala. He could in consequence hurry
 on the marriage, which could now take place before the whole of the

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THE NILOTIC KAVIRONDO

[PT. VI]

When A MAN MARRIES

591 a second or third wife, he may select another place for his new wife, either in the village near his former wife, or he may elect to take her to some other village. A man who has wives dwelling in different places lives with them in turn. Married women are careful in regard to their relations with men. 586 Should a woman be lax in her behaviour or encourage men to visit her, her husband will send her back to her parents and divorce her.

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A wife who is proved to be sterile is not divorced, but her parents send her sister to become the man's wife, and he is expected to pay another sum as a marriage-fee for her; but there is no stated time when the sum shall be paid after the woman goes to live with him. The former wife continues to live with him as his wife.

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Distinctive dress of married women. Each woman after marriage makes a girdle with a long fringe at the back and ties the ends together, which gives it the appearance of a tail. The girdle is worn constantly during the husband's life-time, 765 but, should he die, she takes it off and puts it on the house-roof over the door during the season of mourning to show that she is a widow and is mourning. After marriage a wife scarifies her sides and back in addition to the scarifications she made at puberty. When a woman has a son born, she makes a 352 clay-mound in the middle of the floor in her house for the 852 food pot to rest on when the family are at meals.

844

Birth customs. A wife who expects her confinement calls in an elderly woman to act as midwife. This woman is a person who has had experience in such matters and is herself a mother. When the child is born, the midwife cuts the umbilical cord on an axe handle if the child is a boy, and on a hoe handle if it is a girl. The placenta of a boy is buried outside on the right side of the doorway and that of a girl on the left side. During the first three days the father remains near the house in which his wife and child lie, but the midwife alone enters and attends to the wants of the mother and child. On the third day the father takes a fowl and rubs it on the child's chest and turns it loose, when it becomes the property of the child. When the new moon appears, the parents bathe, and

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Some Customs of the Luwo (or Nilotic Kavirondo) living in South Kavirondo.

By the Rev. H. HARTMANN.

Contents:

Birth. — Betrothal and Marriage. — Burial of a married Man. — Burial of a Woman. — Burial of a Child.

Birth.

546 The Luwo people live together with their families in kraals. These families consist of the owner of the village with his wives, and his sons with their respective wives and children, and the owner's unmarried daughters.

545 Each wife has her own hut. The husband spends most of his time in the hut of his favourite wife. He may, however, have besides a hut for each of his wives, a small hut for himself, but he will never sleep in it. For this purpose he goes to the huts of each of his wives in turn, or generally he sleeps in that of his favourite wife, and visits the others, whenever he is informed by the women that one of them has menstruated, then after 2 days he goes to her hut for a couple of nights.

[833] If a woman has conceived and happens to be one who has not brought forth yet, then 3 or 4 months after conception she gets little incisions (*kado*) made all round the waist. For this operation the patient has to sit down on a stone (nothing else). The operation is performed by an older woman. She uses a crooked thorn which is hooked under the skin, and where the point of the thorn lifts the skin a very tiny cut is made with a native razor. Between every cut there is a space of about $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch. Three rows of incisions are made this way all round the waist just below the navel, the rows being also about $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch apart. No medicine is applied.

842 When the skin is healed again the woman goes home for 3 days to show herself (*iro kado*) and a goat is killed for her by her father. She returns with roasted *windi* flour for brewing beer and a sheep. When the beer is ready the sheep and some chickens are killed and they have a feast (*kong kelo kado*).

After the feast the young woman gets from an older one some medicine, the ashes of burnt herbs, of which she has to taste a little morning and night for one month (*nahgo miado*).

When this month is over she gets another medicine, prepared out of cooked roots of plants (*yadh agala*) which she takes morning and night until one month before giving birth.

[837] In case a woman who is with child has committed adultery she takes a certain medicine, called *manyai*, otherwise she will have a miscarriage or the child will be a weakling.

844 When the hour of childbirth has come the woman sits down on the floor of the hut naked. Even the usual string of beads is taken from her waist. A

- 844 couple of women who have come to assist her, support her shoulders. If the woman is afraid or weak, somebody, generally a strong woman is called to *thuŋgo* her, i. e. she puts her mouth close on the mouth of the patient, and blows her breath down the patient's lungs in order to increase the pressure.

No sooner the child is born or one of the assisting women run out of the hut to pull out of the roof a piece of kaffircorn stalk, which is split leaving a sharp edge. This is used to cut the babe's navel after it has been tied off.

- [201] If the babe is a boy the Kaffircorn stalk is pulled out of the roof at the side of the fire place of the hut (*Kor amach* = lefthand side facing the hut). If it is a girl, the stalk is pulled out *Kor atung* = the right hand side. Compare: Burial of children (p. 274).

When the afterbirth has come out the mother takes the child on her lap, whilst somebody runs for a drop of fresh sheeppmilk — otherwise never consumed — which the child has to drink. Not until the child has swallowed a drop of this will the mother give the child suck.

- 846 Immediately after the birth of the child the husband orders a goat to be killed for the mother, and the pot is put to boil, for the mother has a ravenous appetite. Now word is sent to her father, who will kill a goat for his wife, who comes to see her daughter, bringing some of the meat and fish along.

For no purpose except nature's call is the mother to leave the hut within 4 days, if the babe is a boy. Then she takes the child outside, and a little patch of hair is shaven above the ears of father, mother and child.

- 852 After 10 days a bull and a heifer are bled, meat and fish is cooked, *simsim* is pounded and mixed with rendered butter, and the lot of it is to provide a good feed for the inhabitants of the kraal later in the day. On that day the heads of father, mother and child are shaven clean. Then after the woman is smeared [824] with butter and sprinkled with *simsim* seeds, seedballs of a wild plant (*ochok*) are strung on plaited grass (*oganga*) and creeping grass (*modhono*) and hung crosswise over the shoulders and under the armpits of the young mother. [301] In the same way she is ornamented with cowryshells, ordinary beads, beads of small circular pieces of ostrich eggs (*rek*) and big iron beads.

- [262] When the woman is thus ornamented, a boy, her brother-in-law, is called to hold the child. Now an old woman brings *awinja*. (= pounded *simsim* mixed with rendered butter) and cooked *wimbi*. She kneads a mouthful of the food, making with her thumb a little pit in it (*othwonyo otonge*) which she fills with *awinja*, then she puts it on the end of a wooden ladle, used in stirring the food, 4 times to the mouth of the mother. The 5th time she puts it with the help of the ladle in the mother's mouth, who is not allowed to touch the food with her hand. After she has eaten this one mouthful, another mouthful is given in the same way to her young brother-in-law who holds the child.

Then meat, fish, blood and other food is brought for the inhabitants of the kraal. That night the father and mother of the child sleep again together for the first time after the birth of the child (*iŋgado imbo nyathi*).

If the babe is a girl the woman stays in the hut for 3 days, after which the child is taken outside and a little patch of hair is shaven also above

754 in order to kill him. If a person is thought to be bewitched, the medicine
 [683] man concerned is caught and forced to remove the spell, afterwards being
 punished by a fine. This kind of witchcraft, however, is not thought to
 be very serious. There is a deeper magic called "jamkingo." Amongst
 the Gemi tribe this is practised by the blacksmiths. It is of the nature
 of a secret society, and no doubt means secret poisoning. They have a
 695 form of ordeal called "kiviri." A small pot of water is placed on the fire.
 A little "wimbi" flour and a bit of "medicine" are put into the water.
 If the water boils over, the man is guilty; if not, he is innocent. Another
 ordeal is as follows: A gourd basin with a large hole cut in the bottom is
 placed on a flat stone. Water is then poured into the calabash, the bottom
 of which being, of course, not close-fitting to the stone, would permit ordinarily
 of a leakage. But the medicine man who attends puts into the bottom
 of the calabash crushed-up leaves of a kind of mimosa which, for a time
 at least, stop the leakage and enable the calabash to be filled up with
 water, the retention of the water by the calabash proving the man to be
 innocent. Another ordeal is arranged in this way: Dry flour is given to the
 suspected person. If innocent, he can swallow it; if he is unable to
 moisten the flour with his saliva and swallow it, he is shown to be guilty.

787 As regards omens: If a bird sings on the left-hand side as a man
 777 is starting on a journey, the journey, if for war, will be unlucky; but if
 it be merely a peaceful visit, it will be a fortunate one. If the bird sings
 on the right-hand side, it is a good omen for war, but a bad one for an
 ordinary visit. If a cat crosses the road from right to left, it is a good
 omen; if from left to right, bad. If a rat is seen on the road, and it
 runs along the road ahead of the man, it is a good omen; but if it crosses
 the road from one side to the other, it is an unlucky sign. If on a
 journey a man strikes the little toe of either foot, it is a very bad sign;
 if he strikes the big toe, it is propitious. If the eldest child of a man
 is a boy, and the man sets out to travel, it will be an unlucky sign if
 the first person he meets is also a man. On the other hand, if his eldest
 child is a girl, and he meets a woman when he starts on a journey, that
 is likewise a bad sign. They profess to be able to foretell events by
 787 divining, and the divination is exercised on the entrails of an ox or sheep.
 They are a good deal given to prophesying. The chief Oduu when quite
 a lad prophesied the coming of the white man, and this at a time when
 no white man had entered the country. They believe in rain-makers.

846 On the occasion of a birth the infant, if a boy, is kept inside the house
 for four days; if a girl, for three days. When a birth takes place, the
 [844] female neighbours attend, and a goat is killed for the mother and the
 other women. No man is allowed in the hut until three or four days
 have elapsed. The father of the child does not eat or sleep again in the

856 not begin to speak until after two years, when they are
868 barely able to construct short simple sentences.

DISCIPLINE

861 Formal training in discipline begins as early as the
855 seventh month, at the time when the child may put
some dirty object to its lips. Thus a mother, finding her
child with soil in its mouth, may slap it gently as she
removes the soil, or the hands of the child may be
tapped with anything convenient. A child crawling to-
wards the fire would be immediately pulled away, and
sometimes it might be frightened with the glowing end
of a burning twig in order to impress the danger upon
its mind.

856 It is never certain when a child is first going to walk,
164 for the conditions under which children are brought up
are such that it is impossible for them to escape being
seriously ill at one time or another. Hence the period is
largely determined by the health of the child. The aver-
age time ranges from eleven to fourteen months. A child
who develops very rapidly through the early stages
causes its parents much worry, for it is believed that a
fast-growing child never survives.

855 *Effects of the child's emotions.* The mother's attitude to-
wards the emotions of the child is based on the deep
[844] impression left on her mind by the strain of the birth.
Thus, I have come across women who told me quite
convincingly that whenever they heard one of their
children cry out vigorously they again felt the pain they
had experienced during its birth. A mother tolerates the
emotional outbursts of her child not only because she
loves it but even more because she struggled to bear it.
This seems to be the real cause of the so-called humanity
of women towards children in contrast with the indiffer-
ence sometimes shown by men. Instead of setting the

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deliver. A person standing behind an expectant mother may also be driven away in the fear that if that person's birth had been difficult the birth of the coming child would be equally difficult. Social regulations connected with greetings are found among the pagans and these may result from the instruction of a medicine man. Thus he may prescribe the length of time in which an expectant mother is not allowed to greet those whom she happens to meet on the road. [843] [845] [576]

Although in the family circle a woman is not allowed to overwork during this period, conditions are such that, if left to themselves, they continue with very strenuous work until the time of birth. In the past, expectant mothers stored food which they ate after giving birth. These foodstuffs might be dried meat, dried fish, ghee, and corn for gruel. Nowadays the availability of fresh meat has made it possible to supply women with sufficient food even although it is very expensive. [251]

The amount of rest given to an expectant mother depends on the husband's position in society. With the poorer families, hard work continues till the time of birth. Thus, at one time a woman called Andege took some ripe bananas to Kisumu in the morning, returned at about 2 p.m., and at 4 p.m. gave birth to her daughter, Rapuoda. [844]

Guessing the child's sex. In guessing at the child's sex before birth, the mothers generally rely on past experience. It is recognized to be very difficult, and even impossible, to predict the sex of the first child. Certain guesses depend on the health of the mother, though such guesses are not made public. For a male child it is believed that the mother should be thin; with a female child, the reverse, and these views are probably based on the assumption that male children sap their mother's energy to a greater degree. This is likewise the basis of [846]

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[846] the custom which confines a female child in the hut with its mother for only three days, whereas a male child would stay with its mother for four days, thus giving her a longer rest. In reality, only those women who have given birth to two or more children seem to be able to make any successful guess as to the sex of their expected child.

THE BIRTH OF A CHILD

844
177 *Preparations.* Among the Christian women, customs connected with the preparation for a birth have largely been dropped; but superstition is still a very real factor in the life of every Luo woman. Hence, for example, the preparation of bedding and clothes before a birth is usually neglected on purpose, the position being even worse in families of low income. When women give birth in the maternity wards, the husbands therefore have to make a hasty preparation during the seven days spent by their wives in hospital.

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[302] Among the pagans, the pain or nausea experienced during the first few months of foetal growth is mitigated by the administration of a certain medicine. When this trouble has ceased the woman is expected to grow long hair which should not be shaved until the child is born. Those pagan women who associate much with Christians, however, have abolished this custom of growing hair, though some of them still take the medicine. Among the pagans, the expectant mother takes a light purgative during the sixth month which is believed to free her from any abdominal impurity. Strong purgatives are forbidden in case they may cause abortion or premature birth.

844 *Assistance during delivery.* The assistance a woman receives when giving birth depends on the circumstances in which she finds herself. There is no ruling laid down

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as to which particular people should help her; this obligation merely rests on whomsoever happens to be present. The assistance of a midwife is required more for a first child than for those following. Anyone in the family may help the woman in an emergency; but the presence of the husband is not considered necessary unless the case is a difficult one. In a difficult labour several strong men may be required to hold the woman, but many women give birth to their babies without any assistance. The usual positions adopted are: lying on the back with knees bent, or sitting with the back supported by a tree. Some leaves serve for the mat. Older women often have their child without assistance, but it is an obligation upon everyone who finds a woman in need of help to assist her, even if she is unknown to them.

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On some occasions a woman about to give birth is made to run, eventually being seated to deliver her baby. A light pressure is exerted on the shoulders. The instructions are given by midwives, who sometimes slap the woman across her face if she does not obey their orders.

After a child is born, cold water is poured over it to make it cry. If it does not cry, iron hoes are brought and a series of loud tinkling noises made as a form of persuasion. Among the pagans, tobacco smoke is sometimes puffed into the child's nose. When it has been made to utter its first cry, its head is shaped to the normal form, and while the nurse waits for the placenta, she cleans the baby's forehead with a soft leaf. Before the cord is cut it is tied with strips of dried banana leaves at three equal intervals for a girl and at four equal intervals for a boy, to indicate the length of the period of rest. The midwives used to chant a prayer, but this is now no longer heard. It is possible that this chant was a thanksgiving and a request for the newborn baby to fare well

[782]

in life.

844 in life. The women themselves seem to share a belief that neither their own efforts nor the assistance of others have much effect upon the actual delivery of children. They prefer to believe that it is some mysterious power of God which helps them to give birth to their children.

845 *Difficult labour.* Although difficult labour cases are now largely dealt with in the hospitals, the crude traditional methods are occasionally used in remote areas, and they indicate the extent to which people will go to save the lives of mothers. To the midwives a difficult labour was formerly a dreaded situation. The mothers could suffer for days, and many of them died before relief was given. If a woman died before the birth it was considered a very bad omen. A stranger had to be paid to cut her open and remove the dead child, but no relative of her own was allowed to touch her.

When there was any hope of saving the mother's life, a large number of people gathered about her, and many deaths may have occurred through over-manipulation. Sometimes as many as ten persons were engaged in operating, while others stood by giving confused advice. The group performing the operation included men as well as women. The men held the woman while the women pulled on the head of the child, which was hooked on an iron hoe.

When this was done, little attention was paid to the damage of the passage from the womb. If the woman suffered twice from such a difficult delivery, she and her husband were advised to cease having children. If the advice was not observed the midwives had a right to refuse their help.

[177] *Twins.* The birth of twins was an unwelcome experience in pre-Christianized society, but in these days it is rarely accompanied by its traditional ceremonies of lamentation. According to tradition, as soon as the loud